

Message Text

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USCINCSO ROUTINE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3816

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, PGOV, ES, HO, OAS

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER'S REACTION TO HONDURAN INITIATIVE

REF: (A) STATE 206399, (B) SAN SALVADOR 3801

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING UP ON MY CONVERSATION WITH SUBSECRETARY CASTANEDA (REFTEL B), I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER GORGONOVO ON AUGUST 23 FOR A ONE HOUR DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE SALVADOR-HONDURAS SITUATION. SALVADORAN POSITION BASICALLY FAVORS DIRECT BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOH WITHOUT THIRD PARTIES AND DOES NOT SEE ABSOLUTE NEED FOR BASIC SOLUTION OF BORDER DISPUTE AS SINE QUA NON FOR RESTORATION NORMAL RELATIONS.

2. I REPEATED THE USG MESSAGE IN SUPPORT OF HONDURAN INITIATIVE AND OUR HOPE LULL PROVIDED BY OAS PRESENCE MIGHT BE USED TO MOVE TOWARD SOLUTION BASIC PROBLEMS. WHEN I ASKED IF THE GOES HAD ANY REACTION TO THE GOH INITIATIVE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT "OF COURSE WELCOMED" SUCH A STATEMENT
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BUT BASICALLY DID NOT CONSIDER HONDURAN PROPOSAL AN "INITIATIVE"

OR ANY DIFFERENCE FROM WHAT EL SALVADOR HAS BEEN PROPOSING ALL ALONG. HE SAID EL SALVADOR HAD ALREADY MADE PROPOSAL TO HONDURAS ON HOW TO PROCEED FROM HERE.

3. WHEN I ASKED THE MINISTER WHERE HE SAW THINGS GOING FROM HERE AND WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO FOLLOW UP ON THE HONDURAN PROPOSAL, HE SAID THAT THE GOES CONSIDERS DIRECT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS THE ONLY WORKABLE METHOD. REFERRING TO THE DISPUTED POCKETS ON THE BORDER AS HAVING BEEN HISTORICALLY OCCUPIED AND ADMINISTERED AS SALVADORAN TERRITORY, BORGONOVNO SAID THAT ANY THIRD PARTY INTRODUCED INTO NEGOTIATIONS WHETHER AN ARBITRATOR, MEDIATOR, ICJ, OR OAS WOULD BE TEMPTED TO SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE AND DIVIDE THE POCKETS DOWN THE MIDDLE IN AN EFFORT TO APPEAR IMPARTIAL. THE MINISTER STATED BLUNTLY THAT THE GOES WOULD NOT PLAY THE HONDURAN GAME, WHEREIN THE GOH MADE CLAIMS ON CHUNKS OF SALVADORAN TERRITORY, MADE THOSE CLAIMS THE PARAMOUNT ISSUE OF ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND NOW WAITS FOR AN ARBITER TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE BY CEDING ONE HALF OF THE CLAIMED AREA ON HONDURAS. HE SAID HE KNEW HONDURAS HAD "PAPERS" TO TRY TO PROVE CLAIM, BUT EL SALVADOR DID TOO. BORGONOVNO SAID THAT WITH THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES THAT EXIST IN THIS COUNTRY, NO GOES COULD EXPLAIN ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH A SOLUTION TO THE SALVADORAN PEOPLE.

4. BORGONOVNO REPEATED THAT THE ONLY WAY PROGRESS CAN BE MADE IS THROUGH DIRECT, SECRET BILATERAL NEGOTIATION. HE CITED A LEARNING EXPERIENCE HE HAD IN THE 1973 MEETINGS IN MEXICO, WHEN HE ADMITTED THAT EL SALVADOR WAS FORCED TO PRESENT ITS MOST EXTREME POSITION BECAUSE THERE WERE THIRD PARTIES PRESENT. HE SAID HE HAD EVEN MADE REMARKS IN MEXICO THAT WERE AIRED TO IMPRESS MEMBERS OF HIS OWN LARGE DELEGATION, RATHER THAN AS LEGITIMATE PROPOSALS TO THE HONDURANS. FROM THAT MEETING, BORGONOVNO CAME AWAY CONVINCED THAT MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT BY SMALL TEAMS, MEETING BILATERALLY IN SECRET.

5. TURNING FROM THE IMMEDIATE SUBJECT TO LONGER TERM PROSPECTS BORGONOVNO REITERATED HIS PERSONAL CONCERN WITH THE MOTIVATION, SERIOUSNESS, AND METHOD OF THE GOH IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS. RETURNING TO HIS POINT THAT THE DISPUTED

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POCKETS OF TERRITORY HISTORICALLY HAVE BEEN ADMINISTERED BY EL SALVADOR AND THAT THE ORIGINAL HONDURAN CLAIM WAS KNOWN BY THE HONDURANS THEMSELVES TO BE SPURIOUS, BORGONOVNO SAID THAT THE GOH AND OTHER ELEMENTS IN HONDURAS HAVE NOW REPEATED AND PUBLICIZED THEIR VERSION SO OFTEN THAT IT HAS BECOME A "LIVING TRUTH" IN HONDURAS. BORGONOVNO SAID HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT ARE FULLY COGNIZANT THAT BY USING THIS ISSUE FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME, THE GOH HAS PUT ITSELF IN A TOUGH POLITICAL

POSITION FROM WHICH RETREAT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.
BUT AT THE SAME TIME, HE CONTINUED, EL SALVADOR SHOULD NOT HAVE
TO PAY WITH ITS TERRITORY FOR GOH MISTAKES OF THE PAST.

6. I ASKED BORGONOVO IF HE CONTINUED TO HARBOR SUSPICIONS
THAT THE OGH IS NOT NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH. HE SAID HE HAD
BEEN TOLD (HE WOULDN'T ELABORATE) THAT HIS DOUBTS ALONG
THESE LINES WERE UNFOUNDED, BUT THAT HE CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED
WITH GOH INTENTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS. AS EVIDENCE SUPPORTING HIS
CONCERN HE CITED: (A) THE THREE TIMES IN THE PAST
TWO YEARS WHEN THE TWO NEGOTIATING SIDES APPEARED HEADED FOR
AGREEMENT ON THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO EVENTUAL SOLUTION,
THAT IS AGREEMENT ON THE PROCEDURAL STEPS FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS,

ONLY TO HAVE THE GOH DISMISS ITS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR; AND (B) THE
RECENT GOH ACQUISITION OF AIRPLANES AND OTHER ARMAMENTS. HE
PROPOSED THAT IF FOR WHATEVER REASON THE GOH WANTS TO MAINTAIN THE
STATUS QUO, I.E., RETAINING THE UNRESOLVED DISPUTE WITH EL
SALVADOR AS AN INTERNAL POLITICAL TOOL, IT COULD FOLLOW TWO
STRATEGIES. FIRST, IT COULD REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE. SECOND,
IT COULD MAKE IMPOSSIBLE DEMANDS WHICH IT KNOWS EL SALVADOR
COULD NOT POSSIBLY ACCEPT AND REFUSE TO BUDGE FROM THEM. THE
FOREIGN MINISTER BELIEVES THE GOH HAS CHOSEN THE SECOND METHOD.
HIS CONCLUSION THE GOH IS NOT INTERESTED IN SETTLEMENT.

7. COMMENT: BORGONOVO'S LINE WAS OBVIOUSLY GIVEN STRENGTH FROM
MEETING WITH THE "TECHNICAL COMMITTEE" LAST FRIDAY AND HE IS
NOT READY TO PURSUE AN ALL ROADS TO SOLUTION. IT IS OBVIOUS
HE IS AVOIDING PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE GOH'S POSITION AGAINST ANY
APPROACH BUT DIRECT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS, BECAUSE TO BE
OPPOSED TO MEDIATION, ARBITRATION, INTERNATIONAL COURT, ETC.
"LOOKS BAD IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD". HE IS BEING CRITICIZED
IN SALVADORAN PRESS FOR NOT SPEAKING UP AND FOR ALLOWING HONDURAS
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TO HAVE FLOOR, EVEN THOUGH HE INSISTS HE SPOKE AT PRESIDENT'S
PRESS CONFERENCE LAST SATURDAY AND NOTHING WAS PRINTED SINCE
THE DISPUTE WITH HONDURAS "SIMPLY DOES NOT MAKE NEWS." HE ALSO
CLEARLY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT A BASIC SOLUTION ("DE TONDO")
IS NECESSARY AND THAT NORMAL DIPLOMATIC, COMMERCIAL AND OTHER
RELATIONS CAN BE RESTORED WITHOUT DEFINITELY SOLVING THE BOUND-
ARY PROBLEM--"THERE ARE MANY SUCH DISPUTES WORLDWIDE AND THE COUNTRIES

INVOLVED ENJOY NORMAL RELATIONS."

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